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ADMIRAL, U.S. NAVY (RET.)

June 2, 1999

The Honorable William Cohen  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon, Room 3E880  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In the midst of your busy activities concerning the war in Kosovo, I am sure you have come up against the stark reality of our incapability, despite our declaratory policy, to conduct two wars at nearly the same time with our present forces.

With regard to the maritime component, we continue to draw down our Navy from the Cold War force levels that have shaped our Navy for the last 50 years. As you are well aware, our Navy is still actively deployed around the globe, showing the flag and maintaining the forward presence element of our armed forces that has been our trademark since the Barbary Pirates threatened our overseas trade and commerce. Specifically, I am concerned that the force restructuring currently underway is inadequate in today's much more complex world and unstable global security environment.

Even in the absence of a two-war situation and even before Kosovo, our naval forces were being stretched to the breaking point by our nation's continued security commitments around the globe. While I view these commitments as vital to our nation's interests, I am deeply concerned about the long-term impact such commitments will have on our Navy in the face of reduced military resources.

I firmly believe that our Navy cannot continue to reduce force structure and still be the same effective force upon which Americans have come to rely. The resulting impact of these reductions on our global commitments would be devastating to the maritime preeminence and domestic security that we now enjoy. Consequently, trying to maintain the current tempo of operations and forward presence deployments that we currently do with a smaller force is stressing our Bluejackets to the breaking point<sup>1</sup>. There is no elasticity left in the system.

The pace of recent U.S. Navy contingencies and deployments exceeds the requirements that I faced as Chief of Naval Operations with a force twice the size of our current fleet. Given the uncertainty of the global security situation, it is crucial to our long-term security that we maintain a strong, effective, and capable Navy and avoid a return to a hollow force incapable of supporting our national goals and objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> These views are given to me by hundreds of Naval officers and enlisted personnel as I travel and speak throughout the U.S.

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I have kept abreast of the technological advances that the Navy has incorporated since I left active duty and am very excited about the potential that a net-centric, maritime force brings to national defense. I am also a very strong supporter of current efforts to leverage technology as a force multiplier and believe in emphasizing capabilities as the main tenant of future force structure.

With the global security situation getting more tenuous with each ballistic missile test by adversarial nations, I believe that the current naval force is inadequate to meet that challenge and still be an effective Navy capable of projecting power overseas while protecting our shores at home. I believe numbers do count, because even a highly capable network-centric force is limited in the number of places that it can be at one time. Post World War II history has proven that international engagement is the key to promoting and maintaining global security and stability. A U.S. Navy that possesses the capability to project power around the globe by leveraging its forward presence is the best deterrent to international aggression and a guarantor of American security.

To return to my earlier comment about our declaratory policy of a two-war capability, let me give you my judgement based on a lifetime of military study in terms of the real world. If North Korea were to initiate an all-out attack on the Republic of Korea today, we do not have on hand the naval forces to withstand it. The all-service military force necessary to defeat that attack could only be assembled by a major redeployment of the forces committed to the effort against Milosevic and would leave us incapable at the same time of dealing with an assault against Kuwait by Iraq.

I urge that a minimum of \$10 billion per year for the next five budget years be added to the Department of Defense budgets now projected to be recommended to the Congress as the minimum necessary to make our declaratory policy a reality. Obviously increases of similar magnitude are needed by the other services.

If there is anything I can do to assist you in your efforts to ensure that we maintain a strong Navy and a vigilant defense ready to weather any storm that threatens our security, please don't hesitate to call on me.

Respectfully,



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